

REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

AUGUST 2018



2018 CSA SISTER JUBILARIANS AND ASSOCIATES



*For names and
years of our
2018 Jubilarians,
please see page 2.*

STORIES OF MISSION & MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

Dear Friends,



"So often we dwell on the things that seem impossible rather than on the things that are possible. So often we are depressed for what remains to be done and forget to be thankful for all that has been done."

— Marian Wright Edelman

A number of years ago, I found these words from Marian Wright Edelman in a newsletter; I cut them out and kept them in my prayer space ever since. Periodically, I return to them and reflect on the significance of the sentiments they contain – possibility and gratitude.

The Sisters of St. Agnes began with a can-do attitude. There was no pandering to impossibility as our founder, Fr. Rehrl, gathered young women and widows around him to carry out the mission of Jesus in the pioneer territory of Wisconsin. Without many resources, sometimes with barely enough, the small cohort of women remained steadfast and went forth to teach and evangelize. What seemed impossible eventually turned to flourishing under the watchful eyes of Fr. Rehrl, Mother Agnes and Fr. Francis, and soon the mission of Jesus spread from Wisconsin to parishes, schools and even hospitals in early missions in places as diverse as Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Though the places have changed over the years to Mississippi, Alabama, Nicaragua and even Siberia, the can-do attitude remains, albeit with a twist. We explore possibility and partner with others who collaborate with us in continuing the mission of Jesus in our own times. The recent transfer of sponsorship of our healthcare ministry is but one example of CSA's commitment to possibility.

Thankfulness or gratitude emanates from the many ways we are blessed by those we serve. Our membership within a congregation speaks loudly to lives of mutual love, respect and generosity. We have in our midst sisters from most, if not all, of the locations we have traditionally served, and they bring with them a cultural richness that blesses each and everyone of us as well as those we serve. The blessings can be certain kinds of food, devotional practices, and recreational patterns, as well as the gifts and talents nourished in all sorts of ethnic environments. We are surrounded by the richness that a vibrant, diverse community can provide.

Thankfulness for who and what we are and how we interact with others in mission staves off worry about what needs to be done. The long, slow work of God has led us to this point. What lies ahead beckons. Together with colleagues, friends and partners in mission, we know that the mission of Jesus continues, widens and deepens. Thankfulness and possibility abound.

In the peace and love of Christ,
Sister Jean Steffes, CSA
General Superior

On the Cover

St. Agnes Jubilarians Honored

25 members of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes celebrated anniversaries of their religious profession on June 24, 2018, at Holy Family Catholic Church. In addition, 8 associates were recognized for their years of commitment to CSA.

75 Years ~ top left photo

L to R: Sisters Martina Kuhn, Dennis O'Connor, Marie Endres, Cecelia Schlaefer and Marie Wagner

70 Years ~ top middle photo

L to R: Sisters Mary Martha Karlin, Suzanne Kotel, Ann Walters

60 Years ~ top right photo

Front Row L to R: Sisters Imelda Salazar, Mary Lee Spielbauer, Mary Rose Meis, Kathleen Schmitz

Back Row L to R: Sisters Diane Bauknecht, Carole Gurdak, Josephine Goebel, Jovita Winkel

50 Years ~ right middle photo

L to R: Sisters Mary Riedel, Rose Kowalski, Monique Heller, Gonzaga Hron, Joyann Repp

25 Years ~ bottom left photo

Sister Jane Jaszewski. (Not pictured: Sisters Fátima Ruiz and Petrona Herrera)

15 Years ~ bottom middle photo

Sister Vicki Wuolle

15 Years ~ Associate Jubilarians ~ bottom right photo

L to R: Associates Doreen Holland and Cathy Mathweg (Not pictured: Dolores Turner, Elgerine Gross, Heide Lomangino, Millie Karlin, Molly Sheehan, Pauline Pluhar)

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Editorial Board Members:

Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry,
Sister Susan Treis, Sister Cyndi Nienhaus,
Valerie Graczyk and Suzanne Flood.

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What Were You Wearing?

BY SISTER MARY NOEL BROWN, CSA
EXECUTIVE LEADER OF SPONSORSHIP

What Were You Wearing? is the title of Anna Budelman's capstone project for a course requirement in social work at Marian University in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The outcome far exceeded Anna's expectations. A 2018 graduate of Marian, Anna's experiences during an internship at ASTOP, an agency that works with survivors of sexual assault, led to a public exhibit of clothing representative of attire women were wearing when they were assaulted.

Some comments from attendees at the week-long display at Marian University speak to the impact of the exhibit.

- *Powerful, sad, enraging. You've done an amazing job for this university. Thank you.*
- *I'm heartbroken by the stories.*
- *Good exhibit!... Thanks for highlighting [this] in our community.*
- *As a survivor, I understand the pain and anxiety... It takes immense strength to come forward.*
- *I was nervous to come, but I found comfort in the words of fellow survivors.*
- *As a survivor, this brought tears to my eyes. Some of the stories rang true for me. I should have reported it but never did.*

Many women, numb with disbelief that a terrible nightmare became a reality, don't report a sexual assault. Burdened by shame, self-recrimination, and fear that others will blame them, many victims remain silent. The visual impact of the clothing emboldened unknown courage in the hearts and souls of some women, enabling them to talk about long-hidden secrets with Anna.


Anna "listened to each one's story with compassion, empathy, and openness. I am humbled they sought me out. All I could do was listen without judgment, encouraging them to seek more help.

They realized they were not alone any more. I received so much more than I gave."

Anna grew in appreciating that listening with an open heart and open mind is one of the greatest gifts she can give. The women who talked with Anna came to a deeper understanding of the healing power of unburdening an overpowering secret. In their sharing, each took the first step forward to a future filled with greater hope and promise.



Anna Budelman (left) shares ideas for her exhibit with her friend and classmate, Anna Steberg.



Sister Joleen
with students.

Sister Joleen Retzer

Presence to Those Who Come

BY SISTER ANITA HENNING, CSA

Sister Joleen Retzer has lived and ministered among the Navajo people for 34 years. As the only certified librarian in the school district, she is responsible for the professional development of library clerks in other schools as well as assuming responsibility for the library in a school nearby. “Sister Joleen is more than a librarian though,” says Lori, a colleague. “She is a resource to the teachers because of her extensive background, knowledge and experience in science and teaching. She is a friend and an example to the students, especially those who often don’t have someone paying close attention to them. Her quiet but confident presence instills a feeling that permeates the walls of the library and makes us feel safe and loved.”

Because of a high turnover in personnel at Tsehootsooi Middle School, Sister Joleen hopes that she models consistency, making good choices, and the correct use of the English language. She in turn is fed by the spirituality of the people. There is no separation of the spiritual from daily life. They help Sister Joleen deepen her own native Ojibwa roots. She is encouraged by the number of students who have become teachers and models for the next generation.

The assistant principal Andrew says, “Joleen is our backbone, guide, depository of knowledge and of all our records. Sister Retzer is an inspiration and a smiling face on a bad day, a friend willing to lend an ear.”

Sister Joleen also assists in the parishes in the area. The youth from four parishes come together as a youth group. Sister Joleen supports their activities. She does much of the gardening on the grounds of Saint Michaels and helps with the greenhouse when necessary.

The people in this area have many needs and challenges due to the poverty. The environment is harsh with winter snow, dirt roads, and houses distant from each other. Sisters from various communities work together to find and distribute donations. The people help each other. Fundraisers are held to help pay for someone's hospital stay. Kurt, a mechanic, fixes vehicles for the elders at the lowest possible price. When Sister Joleen goes to Albuquerque, she takes Kurt along. He searches junk yards to find needed parts. No matter who comes into her day, Sister Joleen takes the time to be present and she loves what she does.

The words of Chris, Youth Minister of four parishes, seem to sum up Sister Joleen's ministry to those who come:

"Joleen truly does bring Christ to others through her gift of presence at home, in the parish, and in the library at school. She supports me at home as we share prayer and values together, quietly helping where and when needed at the parish and helping me with youth ministry. She does not use the title Sister at the public school, but people still address her as Sister. It is her quiet, gentle manner that people recognize as something special she has to share with so many and so generously."

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Germaine Lichtle, CSA

April 7, 2018

Sister Germaine, born in Decatur, Indiana, on February 21, 1923, made her profession of vows on August 15, 1944. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in 1952 and an MA in Business Education from the College of St. Rose, Albany, NY, in 1964. She became a certified Retirement Planning Specialist for Religious in her later years. She taught in elementary grades for eleven years in Indiana and Kansas and business classes in secondary schools for 34 years in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and New York. For six years Sister was a part-time adjunct instructor in business education at Marian College. In her retirement she became a member of the Foster Grandmother Program and tutored in the Learning Resource Center at St. Mary's Springs Academy for 17 years.



Sister Mary Neff, CSA

April 9, 2018

Sister Mary Neff was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on November 13, 1927. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1947, as Sister Mary Donald. Sister Mary received a BA in Art/Art Ed from Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and earned an MA in Art from Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana. She did post-graduate studies in counseling and received a certificate in pastoral counseling from Cardinal Meyer Institute, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She taught first grade for 16 years in Wisconsin and Minnesota. She was an illustrator for children's educational materials for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. She taught art at Marian High School, Hays, Kansas, and at St. Francis Seminary, Victoria, Kansas, for eight years and was on the Marian College faculty for 23 years as Assistant Professor of Art and Director of the Art Department. In her retirement Sister Mary gave private lessons in drawing, painting and calligraphy at her Mariart Studio.




Sister Patricia Scanlan, CSA

May 16, 2018

Sister Patricia Scanlan was born in Riverdale, New York, on March 27, 1933. She was raised in a family of six, including two boys and four girls. She made her first profession of vows as Sister Malachy on August 15, 1953. She received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac. She furthered her education, earning an MA in Theology from Manhattan College, Bronx, New York. She also received a Certificate in Youth Ministry from Douglaston Seminary, Long Island, New York. Sister Patricia taught for 36 years throughout the Midwest and New York. She was a religion teacher as well as a physical education instructor and coach and later worked in the Youth and Aged Ministry office, did Parish Evangelization and was a Pastoral Associate.

For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org. Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.



Sister Pat on
a home visit.

CSA Ministries in New York, NY

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

At *The Leo House* in New York City, four Sisters of St. Agnes living at this historic guest house, described their current ministries.

Sister Joann Sambs, Executive Director of *The Dwelling Place*, a shelter for homeless women, explained, “On any given night over 60,000 people live in homeless shelters or on the streets. I see the face of homelessness every day. *The Dwelling Place* provides shelter for fourteen women who would otherwise be on the street. Case workers meet with each client to assess her needs and create a plan to become self-sufficient and to find permanent housing. I find I use all the skills and learning from past ministries to continue this 40-year ministry of love and empowerment.”

In her new ministry, Sister Vicki Wuolle says: “Living in community at *The Leo House* is delightful. I couldn’t

have chosen a better place to be. I love New York!” As Executive Director of *The Leadership Collaborative*, Sister Vicki serves women religious under the age of 60. “We have offered leadership development programs to over forty-seven religious communities. The Initial Leadership Development’s eighteen-month program places an emphasis on transformational servant-leadership with a focus of support for the next generation of women religious as leaders.”

As a visiting nurse with the *Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service*, Sister Pat Hayes visits new moms for at risk pre-natal care and post-partum checkups. “I speak Spanish, an important skill in providing health care for Hispanic families. The mission of the Little Sisters of the Assumption fits our CSA mission of working with the poor, the disenfranchised, and marginalized, as well as furthering the role of women in society.” Affordable housing is a major challenge



L to R: Richard Borowicz, Sister Marilyn, David Smith, David Ernst and Ashely Bryant

for women who often must pay \$1,000 a month to rent one room with shared bath and kitchen. Sister Pat continued, “Having worked in New York for twelve years, I love the diversity and energy of the city and enjoy taking walks along the Hudson River. Nature and prayer keep me grounded and help me to be a joyful witness in the midst of poverty.”

Sister Marilyn Ellickson, Development Manager, is the keeper of history and stories of *The Leo House*. Reflecting on her ministry there, she said, “Part of CSA’s charism is hospitality. Along with Leo House co-workers, I have opportunities each day to welcome guests from all parts of the globe. Each day is different as we serve tourists, study-groups, clergy, writers, marathon runners, people seeking medical help or visiting infirmed relatives, members of UNANIMA International, as well as those who come yearly for their ‘NY fix!’ Often, I can connect CSA history with Leo House history. My most recent example is an archival copy of Sister Mary Neff’s original sketch of the 6-foot statue of *Our Lady of the Travelers*, permanently on display in *The Leo House* garden.”



Sister Joann Sambs, left, with Brother Michael Harlan, OFM, and Marion Miner, board members of *The Dwelling Place*.

“Yes, I Can See”

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

“Yes, I can see!” was the delighted response of a little girl when she was fitted with her first pair of glasses.

On a recent mission trip to Nicaragua, Sister Katie Schilling worked for ten days as a translator for Dr. Ann Schlaefer and her team of fifteen eye care professionals. Dr. Ann is a third-generation optometrist from Campbellsport, Wisconsin, following in the footsteps of both her father and grandfather who also were eye doctors. For the past twenty years the Schlaefer family has led mission trips to Nicaragua. Sister Katie hosted their very first trip in Puerto Cabezas which was led by Dr. Ann’s father.

Sister Katie returned to Fond du Lac in 2013 after serving as a missionary to Nicaragua for twenty-five years. Her invitation to translate during the eye clinic in 2018 gave her an opportunity to return.

The mining town of Siuna, located on the North Atlantic coast, was selected as the site for the clinic this year. “Located in a very poor area, it took us nine hours on a school bus over unpaved roads to get there. Every day people would be lined up, waiting for us to begin at 7:30 a.m. We worked until 6:00 p.m. and on one night until 9:00 p.m.,” shared Sister Katie. “Some people walked four hours just to get to the road to ride on a school bus for another four hours to reach the clinic for eye care. They were so grateful to be fitted with eye glasses collected from the Fond du Lac area.”

“I always feel I receive more than I give,” Sister Katie continued. “To once again experience the faith and trust in God of these very poor people is a gift. Every person we saw gave us a hug and blessed us for coming. It was wonderful! The little girl who exclaimed, ‘I can see,’ touched my heart so deeply. It was little moments like that which made up for the weariness and discomfort of rugged and bumpy roads, little or no running water, and the humid hot weather.”

Sister Katie with an eye glass recipient





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Ways to connect with CSA:



CSA web site:
www.csasisters.org

Enriched By Those We Serve

BY CAROL BRAUN,
DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

CSA sisters and associates gathered on Saturday afternoon, May 12, 2018, with members of the civic community for *Stone Soup*. *Stone Soup* is not a soup kitchen or food pantry but a community of people who gather each week around a shared meal. *Stone Soup* was founded in Fond du Lac by several members of the Memorial Baptist faith community. The concept of *Stone Soup* is based on a French folk tale which relates the story of hungry strangers entering a town. They convince the people of the town to share a small amount of their food so that a full meal might be enjoyed by all!

Each Saturday a shared meal comes together through the generosity of volunteers. One week CSA sisters and associates volunteered to prepare a meal of hearty goulash, salad, fruit and desserts. They gathered with other volunteers and guests in sharing food, fellowship, and hospitality. At *Stone Soup*, everyone is both host and guest at the table. Here you can eat a meal and enjoy the company of others in an

accepting and welcoming environment. An abundance of conversation, hugs, smiles, and promises of prayers, provide a feeling of warmth and friendship.



CSA sisters and associates with members of the civic community.

At *Stone Soup* many who first came as guests to receive a meal are now part of the team, assisting with setting up and cleaning up. Some weeks volunteers just stop by to say hello. CSA sisters and associates share in the joy of giving and receiving, *aware that we, too, are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve.*